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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 375th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 27 January 2016, at 3 p.m.

Temporary Chair: Mr. Ban Ki-moon ..... (Secretary-General)
Chair: Mr. Seck ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda (A/AC.183/2016/L.1)

1. The agenda was adopted.

Election of officers

2. **The Temporary Chair** invited the Committee to consider nominations for the posts of Chair, Vice Chairs and Rapporteur of the Committee.

3. **Mr. Morejón Pazmiño** (Ecuador) nominated Mr. Seck (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chair, Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba), Mr. Percaya (Indonesia), Mr. Emvula (Namibia) and Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) for re-election as the five Vice Chairs, and Mr. Grima (Malta) for re-election to the office of Rapporteur.

4. **Ms. Bin Ibrahim** (Malaysia) seconded the nominations.

5. *Mr. Seck (Senegal), Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Mr Reyes Rodriguez (Cuba), Mr. Percaya (Indonesia), Mr. Emvula (Namibia), Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) and Mr. Grima (Malta) were elected by acclamation.*

6. *Mr. Seck (Senegal) took the Chair.*

Statement by the Secretary-General

7. **The Secretary-General** said that the Committee was critical to keeping the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in the international spotlight. Violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory continued unabated. The previous day he had addressed the Security Council on the issue and strongly condemned the stabbings, vehicle attacks and shootings by Palestinians targeting Israeli civilians. He had expressed concern about clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces that continued to claim lives. The position of the United Nations was that settlements were illegal under international law and threatened to destroy the two-State solution. Israel should take action consistent with prior agreements, in particular in Area C, to improve Palestinian lives, empower Palestinian institutions and enhance stability and security for Israelis and Palestinians.

8. The Palestinian leadership should stand against incitement, improve governance and reunite Gaza and the West Bank under a single legitimate Palestinian Authority. All those points needed to be said and repeated. Yet he could understand why Palestinians living the reality on the ground might dismiss them because they had heard so much of them before. After nearly 50 years of occupation, and decades of waiting for the fulfilment of the Oslo promises, Palestinians, and young people in particular, were losing hope. They were angered by the stifling policies of the occupation and frustrated by the strictures on their daily lives. They watched as Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, expanded. They were losing faith in the ability of their own leadership to deliver genuine national reconciliation and saw the dream of a sovereign, contiguous and independent Palestinian State slip away.

9. The people of Palestine had lived through half a century of occupation and had heard half a century of statements condemning it, but life had not meaningfully changed. Children had become grandparents, but life had not changed. Statements had been issued and concern had been expressed, but life had not changed. Some Palestinians wondered whether they were expected to watch as the world endlessly debated how to divide land while it disappeared before their very eyes.

10. Nothing excused terror or justified the targeting of innocent people but security measures would not be enough to end that violence. The underlying frustration and failure to achieve a political solution needed to be addressed.

11. The United Nations was committed to creating the conditions for the parties to return to meaningful negotiations. That was the only path to a just and lasting solution, and an end to the occupation that began in 1967, leading to a sovereign and independent State of Palestine living side by side with Israel.

12. Of course, Israelis and Palestinians had a stake in achieving that peace, as did the rest of the world. Security and lasting peace would mean so much to so many. He would continue to do everything in his power to achieve long overdue peace, and counted on the Committee to take action to bring Israelis and Palestinians together to meet that shared goal.

Statement by the Chair

13. **The Chair** said that since the Committee's report covering the period from 7 October 2014 to 6 October 2015 had been submitted to the General Assembly,

illegal settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem had continued and violence had escalated. The situation in the Gaza Strip was particularly grave after nearly nine years of the blockade. The condition of millions of Palestine refugees scattered around the world and in particular in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic was deplorable. In spite of laudable efforts by the Middle East Quartet, the prospects for a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question seemed dim. Indeed, attention was focused on other crises in the region, at the expense of the Palestinian cause.

14. The Committee would continue to monitor the situation and raise international awareness of the right of the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights fully, with a special focus on the terms of reference of the Madrid Peace Conference, the Quartet road map and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Committee would continue to work with the international community to achieve a lasting peace in the region. In that light, the Committee was planning to hold meetings in France, Senegal and Sweden in the coming year. The various meetings would discuss, inter alia, the legal aspects of the occupation, the question of Jerusalem and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

15. Failure to resolve the conflict incurred serious risks, including violent extremism and terrorism that might target civilians in Israel, Palestine and elsewhere around the world. All actors should therefore be unstinting in their determination to establish a sovereign, viable and independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with the State of Israel, in peace and security, within internationally recognized and guaranteed borders.

16. The Division for Palestinian Rights should continue to implement its training programme for Palestinians in order to better meet the needs of an independent and viable Palestinian State.

Statement by the Observer for the State of Palestine

17. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Palestinian leadership had expressed appreciation for the principled position articulated by the Secretary-General in the Security Council the previous day. The status quo was unsustainable and it was imperative to find ways to open doors to peace through a political process that kept hopes for peace alive. No one would benefit more from that than the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. The Palestinian people and leadership would work in favour of a meaningful process, leading to an end to the occupation and a two-State solution.

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

18. **The Chair** said that, since the previous meeting of the Committee, on 23 November 2015, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, organized in conjunction with the Observer Mission of the State of Palestine, had again highlighted various facets of Palestinian culture and the effects of the occupation and war on Palestinian children who, like all children around the world, aspired and were entitled to peace, education, health and leisure.

19. The General Assembly had adopted the four resolutions submitted by the Committee, thus reaffirming the responsibility of the United Nations for the question of Palestine.

20. On 14 and 15 December 2015, the Committee had successfully organized, together with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Government of Indonesia, an International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem.

21. On 16 December 2015, the Committee had held the United Nations Civil Society Forum on the Question of Palestine.

22. On 26 January 2016, the Security Council had held a public debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", during which Mr. Reyes Rodríguez, Vice-Chair, had delivered a statement on behalf of the Committee.

Draft programme of work of the Committee (A/AC.183/2016/L.2)

23. **The Chair**, introducing the Committee's draft programme of work for 2016 (A/AC.183/2016/L.2), said that section I listed the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its seventieth session; section II briefly reviewed developments since the submission of the Committee's report and expressed concerns over continuing violations committed by Israel; section III indicated priority issues in the Committee's programme of work for 2016; and section IV contained a description of the planned activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights. The Bureau

would revise the programme of work throughout the year, as necessary.

24. He took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft programme of work.

25. *It was so decided.*

Report on the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem and the United Nations Civil Society Forum on the Question of Palestine

26. **Mr. Grima** (Malta), Rapporteur, introducing his report on the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem and the United Nations Civil Society Forum on the Question of Palestine, held in Jakarta on 14 and 15 December and on 16 December 2015, respectively, said that the International Conference had brought together 55 States members of the United Nations and two observer States, as well as United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society representatives from the region and beyond.

27. At the Conference, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia had asserted that the issue of Jerusalem was of strategic importance not only for Palestine and Israel but also for all Muslims, Christians and Jews. In his message, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had warned against any action that could be interpreted as changing the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem, adding that security measures alone could not resolve what was essentially a political conflict. The Vice-Chair of the Committee, Mr. Percaya, had emphasized that the conflict was not about religion but about the dispossession of a people and occupation. Any attempt to introduce a religious dimension would play into the hands of extremists. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine had said that the world had failed to activate existing mechanisms of protection and accountability. Member States should not agree to meetings with Israeli officials who were settlers and should ban companies that were involved in the occupation as well as settlement products. The Minister had called on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and to end the occupation. Lastly, the Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation had said that the continuation of Israeli aggression against Palestinians would further spread conflict and risked giving it a religious dimension.

28. The opening segment had been followed by two panel discussions during which speakers had described how Israel implemented a discriminatory policy in order to weaken the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem, a city with a polarized population and periodic violent outbursts. It had been noted that physically divided cities did not normally prosper. The mainstreaming of moderates on both sides was therefore important.

29. In the Civil Society Forum, speakers had discussed United Nations efforts to find a solution to the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the situation on the ground, and regional and local civil society initiatives in support of Palestinian rights.

United Nations Round Table on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine (working paper No. 1)

30. **The Chair** drew attention to working paper No. 1, which contained the provisional programme for the United Nations Round Table on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine, to be held in Amman from 15 to 17 March 2016. The event would consider instruments and institutions of international treaty and human rights law — theory and practice. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the round table.

31. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.